

Mary Montague Scott – Launch Speech Transcript

Welcome

My father, Lord Montague, is here today, which is fantastic, to the opening of The Talking Walls. This is a really interesting project that came to us actually four years ago. Debs was introduced to us by a local resident, John Pemberton, who is very interested in the history of the Abbey and he introduced us to Debs who was at the time interested in developing this concept as part of an MA. And she came to visit us and said, well, would we be interested in working with her and devising this audio visual interactive tour that had the potential to use with smartphones, which is the long and short of it, and that we would then work with them, with our archives to recreate the abbey as it was in its heyday. We were very excited by this project and thought it would be a great idea and we then, or she then started to look to secure funding for this project to work with them and delighted to say that SEEDA, the South East England Development Agency, came in as a major partner, and the Business Link South East were also great partners in this project, supporting her financially to develop this, then with Southampton Solent University and the University of Winchester, so we had many partners in this project. It is a great example of a partnership working, and together with our archives at Beaulieu, and our archivist Susan Tomkins, she started to work on this, putting together a story of the history of Beaulieu Abbey onto this interactive.

It is a very indepth tour and I hope you all have a chance to really explore it today or if not, back at home because it is live on the website: www.thetalkingwalls.co.uk and when you go home and you can explore the abbey through 9 different characters who were involved here, from King John, through to the Abbot, to all sorts of different people, and each character even has a different theme tune. The music was composed especially for each character, and its a very indepth tour, and we hope that in the future, this will stand within our exhibition here at Beaulieu Abbey to enable visitors to, in future, when smartphones become more useable by everybody, that they will be able to download as they walk around the site, which is a really good thing because it means you don't need so much hard interpretation within the ruins.

One of the things that can slightly effect the way a beautiful abbey like this could look is putting up lots of boards everywhere with interpretation and slightly spoil the atmosphere so this new technology will enable us to give the information to the visitors in a very subtle way and hopefully a very good experience.

We are currently doing a refurbishment of all our abbey exhibition here at Beaulieu, and the bit that we are in now is called the 'undercroft' and Domus was last done in

1977, and we have just started a refurbishment, we're working through from the far end where we have an audio visual and new graphic panels, and in the next few years we hope that this this will transform. We are going to remove the slightly heavy structures that we have and replace them with new interpretation, and this is the sort of foreunner of this, this new look, this new technology will be very much in place with this.

And I hope you will come back when we re-open our new exhibition in a few years time. We are delighted to have worked with Debs, and it has been a fantastic experience, she is brilliant to work with and she's now become one of the leading experts on Beaulieu Abbey's history as a result. So I am going to pass you over to Deborah and she is going to tell you a little more about that project.